



Spring Meeting  
Northern California Chapter of the American Musicological Society

April 12, 2025  
The Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies  
Dr. Martin Luther King Library, 5<sup>th</sup> floor  
San José State University

9:30–10:00: coffee, light breakfast

**10:00–11:30: Paper Session 1**

Chris East (Stanford University), “Stravinsky's Firebird: Between Stage and Page”

Arya Tavallaei (UC Santa Cruz), “Visualizing Popular Music: Politics, Modern Femininity, and Attitudes towards Musical Shows of Iranian Television in the 1970s”

Brian Peterson (Shasta College), “Champagne, Aural Attestation, and the Curious Case of Lloyd Mumm's Starlight Roof Orchestra: A Rare Covering of the Lawrence Welk Orchestra in American Music (1958)”

11:30–11:45: break

**11:45–12:45: Paper Session 2**

Rory O'Regan (San Francisco Conservatory), “Sonic Hierarchy: Investigating High Horn Bias in the Baroque Period”

Beverly Wilcox (CSU Sacramento), “Concerts, Publishing, and Economic Migration: Bohemian Horn Players in Paris (1750-1789)”

12:45–1:45: lunch (provided)

**1:45–2:00: Northern California Chapter business meeting (including elections)**

**2:00–3:00: Book Panel**

Featuring Stephen Hinton (Stanford University), Rachana Vajjhala (UC Davis), and Mary Ann Smart (UC Berkeley)

3:00–3:15: break

**3:15–4:45: Paper Session 3**

Siamak Barghi (UC Santa Cruz), “Innovations in Tombak Performance throughout 2000s & 2010s: Novel Approaches and Extended Techniques”

Rubina Mazurka Hovhannisyan (UC Berkeley), “Why Organ? Forming the Veneto-Cretan Identity”

D. Kern Holoman (UC Davis), “Helen Kotas to Marion Lychenheim and ‘all the Gals’: Stoky and the All-American Youth Orchestra in South America”

4:45–5:45: reception

## Abstracts

### **10:00–11:30: Paper Session 1**

**Chris East (Stanford University), “Stravinsky's Firebird: Between Stage and Page”**

Stravinsky's *Firebird* has received relatively little scholarly attention compared to the composer's later works. Often regarded as a mere steppingstone to the later “Russian period” music, *The Firebird* is simultaneously construed as both a harbinger of the Stravinsky to come and an embarrassingly anachronistic piece at odds with his reputation as a relentless innovator. In contrast to this musicological point of view, contemporary accounts of the ballet emphasize the striking originality of Stravinsky's score. Audience members and Ballets Russes personnel alike were enthralled as well as perplexed by the twenty-eight-year-old composer's incendiary international debut, describing it as the perfect complement to Michael Fokine's innovative choreography and Aleksandr Golovin's sumptuous décor. This disconnect between contemporary critical and later scholarly perspectives owes to differing conceptions of *The Firebird* as a musical work—the former understanding it as a fully-staged ballet and the latter treating it primarily as orchestral music that prepared the way for *The Rite of Spring*. While both perspectives offer valuable insights, I argue that understanding *The Firebird's* success requires deeper engagement with firsthand accounts of the ballet's creation and reception. Rather than isolating and scrutinizing Stravinsky's score to assess its originality, I examine how critics and members of the Ballets Russes conceived of *The Firebird* as a unique synthesis of music, dance, and design. Following a summary of the plot and *The Firebird's* convoluted journey from libretto to the Paris Opéra, I describe contemporaneous critical response. Finally, I place these accounts in dialogue with musicological literature on *The Firebird* to illustrate how broader conceptions of originality yield a deeper understanding of the work's historical significance.

**Arya Tavallaei (UC Santa Cruz), “Visualizing Popular Music: Politics, Modern Femininity, and Attitudes towards Musical Schows of Iranian Television in the 1970s”**

The establishment of Iranian National Radio and Television (NIRT) in the late 1960s played a crucial role in shaping modern popular music, reflecting the Pahlavi state's vision of Westernized modernization, and promoting a selective image of culture. This included emphasizing Western-influenced pop music, refined national dance, and the visibility of female performers. Based on an analysis of archival musical TV shows and historical documents regarding attitudes toward television's role in Iranian modern society during the 1960s and 1970s, I argue that NIRT sought to elevate itself above traditional popular genres, like Kouchehbazari, by excluding its musical and dance elements and instead promoting Western-styled popular music. In addition to

marginalizing traditional popular music in café and cabarets, NIRT introduced dozens of young female pop stars in an attempt to normalize the presence of women in the public sphere. These music programs not only challenged gender norms but also emphasized women's visibility as a symbol of modernity. Googoosh, a young superstar in the early 1970s, embodied this image with exaggerated dance moves and highly feminine appearance, portraying an idealized modern Iranian woman. Television highly focused on the extravagant Iranian upper-class, celebrating wealth, showcasing luxurious interiors, flamboyant fashion, and alternative social behaviors, particularly among women. However, this modernization project was met with resistance from both leftist intellectuals and religious groups, who viewed musical TV shows as symbols of cultural decay and foreign influence that led to the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

**Brian Peterson (Shasta College), “Champagne, Aural Attestation, and the Curious Case of Lloyd Mumm's Starlight Roof Orchestra: A Rare Covering of the Lawrence Welk Orchestra in American Music (1958)”**

This paper explores the distinction of two studio recordings of “champagne music” released by Omega Disk records (1958, USA) during the postwar height of bandleader/television personality, Lawrence Welk (1903-1992). This presentation begins with a brief survey of Welk's ascent as a popular musician defined by his signature marketing style of “champagne music,” a niche approach within mainstream dance orchestras in commercial music, 1924-1982. After a brief exploration of three tendencies that define the compositional characteristics of this music, a deeper inquiry into the “champagne” style as a culturally aspirational music follows next, drawing on the recent work of musicologist John Howland, Ph.D. (2021). This provides a lens for a more focused inquiry of Lloyd Mumm and the Starlight Orchestra's LP vinyl recordings, “Champagne Music for Dancing” and “Pink Champagne for Dancing” (Omega Disk, 1958). This connects to the core analysis: how do these two albums affirm Welk's stylistic innovations as a basis for genre and historical categorization? How do Welk's musical preferences, idiomatic conventions, and larger cultural aspirations surface through careful consideration of the Omega Disk studio recordings contemporary to Welk in the same cultural and historical context of his television fame? This paper argues the significance of these two period recordings as historical sources contemporary to Welk that function for musicologists as a “second wave” or attestation of the commercial viability of Welk's signature, “champagne style” thus offering valuable, scholarly outcomes in terms of further definition, categorization, and insights into the “champagne style” within twentieth-century American historical music.

### **11:45–12:45: Paper Session 2**

**Rory O'Regan (San Francisco Conservatory), “Sonic Hierarchy: Investigating High Horn Bias in the Baroque Period”**

During the Baroque period, the use of the horn as a chamber and orchestral instrument proliferated. Composers of the era wrote especially for “cor alto” players, or hornists who specialized in high-range playing. This stylistic preference over writing virtuosic and soloistic parts for “cor basso” (low-horn) players developed until there was a definite bias against cor basso players as described in Jaques-Francois Gallay’s 1843 treatise. Gallay described the high horn as “the true interpreter of song” and “the preferred instrument of composers” as opposed to the low horn. Using evidence collected by examining scores and aggregating data on the tessitura of baroque horn parts, mostly from the German-speaking world, this paper shows that Baroque sensibilities were biased towards the middle and high registers, and that the use of the full potential of the low horn was uncommon. This paper then considers the factors that may have contributed to the aforementioned bias, including Baroque orchestration practices and technological limitations of the horn, as well as how this bias began to change during the Classical period and how it manifests in the present day.

**Beverly Wilcox (CSU Sacramento), “Concerts, Publishing, and Economic Migration: Bohemian Horn Players in Paris (1750-1789)”**

When the Bohemian Waldhorn player Jan Václav Stich arrived in Paris in 1776 as a touring virtuoso calling himself “Giovanni Punto,” he encountered a system of music engravers, specialty printers, music shops, and legal protections that had developed nowhere else in Europe. He took advantage of the opportunity to perform and publish horn concertos featuring a secret Bohemian hand-stopping technique that produced notes not found in the harmonic series, with obvious benefits to his reputation and future earning power.

Punto was the most successful of the Bohemian horn players who made this journey. Some had solo careers or toured as horn duettists; others were hired by opera and court orchestras. Nor were hornists the only Bohemian musicians to do this: violinists, cellists, harpists, and others made their debuts in public concerts, and at least six composers premiered their works.

This paper provides evidence that the expensive and uncomfortable journey to Paris was worthwhile for musicians employed in a patronage system who wished to investigate musical capitalism. No matter how they felt about their Paris adventures – negative for Gluck, positive for Punto, the Stamitzes and Rosetti – they saw a way to reduce their dependency on a patron’s largesse by seeking “mass patronage” through concertizing and publishing. One wonders if the aging Punto and the young Beethoven talked about this while rehearsing and performing latter’s Sonata for Piano with Horn, op. 17 in Vienna and Pest in the spring of 1800.

**3:15–4:45: Paper Session 3**

**Siamak Barghi (UC Santa Cruz), “Innovations in Tombak Performance throughout 2000s & 2010s: Novel Approaches and Extended Techniques”**

This paper presents a brief socio-cultural history of the *tombak*, Iran’s principal percussion instrument, while offering an in-depth examination of its stylistic evolution and extended techniques in the 2000s and 2010s. Tracing the instrument’s transformation from the late *Qajar* period to the present, the study explores the shifting perceptions of tombak players—from marginalized entertainers to highly respected musicians within Iranian classical music. Through a review of historical texts and musical transcriptions, the research highlights the *tombak*’s evolution from a simple rhythmic accompaniment to a sophisticated solo instrument. A particular focus is given to the pioneering contributions of contemporary musicians, with a detailed analysis of Navid Afghah’s innovative approaches. His introduction of new technical elements—such as greater hand independence, expanded tonal palettes, ostinato layering, and novel compositional structures—has redefined modern tombak performance. By transcribing and analyzing key works, this study illustrates how Afghah and his contemporaries have elevated the instrument beyond its traditional role, transforming it into a vehicle for intricate and expressive musical narratives. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology, this research offers fresh insights into the *tombak*’s musical evolution, its rising socio-cultural status, the dynamics of musical identity, and its expanding role in global music discourse. By bridging historical perspectives with contemporary innovations, this paper underscores the *tombak*’s artistic significance and its trajectory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Rubina Mazurka Hovhannisyan (UC Berkeley), “Why Organ? Forming the Veneto-Cretan Identity”**

The 1570 Ottoman conquest of Cyprus shocked the Venetian Republic into loosening its draconian rule over the Greek Orthodox population on Crete. This benevolence entailed forcibly installing pipe organs in every church on Crete, Catholic and Orthodox. Venice’s ambition to create a chimerical Veneto-Cretan identity aimed to prevent Cretan Greeks from siding with the Ottomans in anticipation of another violent conflict. This forceful Latinization of the Orthodox Church likely impacted sacred and secular music on Crete; it also reflected a broader trend of import from Venice to Crete of organs and organ builders. Greek-Cretan musicians studied organ in Venice and after would return to Crete or settle in European cultural centers, encapsulating the Veneto-Cretan identity in the professional musician. Why did Venice specifically choose the organ for the cultivation of this hybrid identity? The organ is a peculiar choice of instrument to unify the Orthodox and Catholic churches, yet it’s at the center of Venetian rule over Crete. I argue that the Venetian Republic chose the organ to cultivate this cultural and sacred hybrid identity because of the instrument’s symbolic and physical characteristics. Its central role in the Holy Mass and its affinity for reflecting Humanist symbolism – as evident by Girolamo Diruta’s 1593 organ treatise – positioned the organ at the crossroads of this exchange. By engaging with

Diruta's treatise, I show how the organ facilitated the transfer of materials, knowledge, and power through its position in between the sacred and secular worlds of Venice and Crete.

**D. Kern Holoman (UC Davis), "Helen Kotas to Marion Lychenheim and 'all the Gals': Stoky and the All-American Youth Orchestra in South America"**

Buried deep in the library of my late colleague Robert Samson Bloch were the papers of his mother, Marion Lychenheim (1891–1983), a noted Chicago pianist, composer, and principal bassoonist in the Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago. In Lychenheim's archive we find transcripts of a significant correspondence from the young French hornist Helen Kotas (1916–2000), soon to become principal in the Chicago Symphony (1941–47). These sixty-one pages of typescript describe the 1940 South American tour of the All-American Youth Orchestra. Marion Lychenheim was meant to circulate Helen's letters among the members of the Woman's Orchestra back in Chicago, especially the wind players.

Helen Kotas, at age 24, was one of some 16 women in the AAYO of about 100 players. Her astute observations, in essentially real time, describe not only Stokowski and his unusual manner, but also the young musicians who were to anchor American orchestras for the generation to come. She navigates early-career anxieties and the rivalries inherent in such a rarified community of stars in the making with considerable aplomb. She and her associates go on to discover cultures and artists—Villa-Lobos, Guiomar Novaes, Magda Tagliaferro, stars of Brazilian folk music—of which they knew little; and they gradually grasp the political reality of representing their own nation as world war becomes inevitable.

Kotas's daily letters also afford significant correctives to standard accounts of the AAYSO in South America, particularly as to their itinerary and Stokowski's project of recording 100 records for Columbia.

*in memoriam Robert Samson Bloch (1934–2023)*